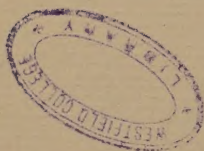


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THE UNPUBLISHED AND UNCOLLECTED

LETTERS OF WILLIAM COWPER

EDITED BY

THOMAS WRIGHT

*Author of "The Life of William Cowper," Editor of the
"Correspondence of William Cowper," Secretary of the
Cowper Society, etc.*

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PREFACE

As regards editions of Cowper's letters, my own, which contains very many more letters than the next largest edition—Southey's—superseded, of course, all others. It was issued in four volumes in 1904 by Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton. Since the appearance of that work two small collections of Cowper's letters have been given to the public—namely, those in *Notes and Queries*, 1904 (twenty-four letters), and those in J. C. Bailey's edition of *The Poems of William Cowper* (thirty-five letters), issued in 1905. Those in *Notes and Queries* were supplied by the late Dr. Mayor, principally from badly mutilated copies in the handwriting of some kinsman of Cowper's. In 1918 Mr. George Avenell presented to the Cowper Museum, at Olney, a portfolio containing sixteen original letters, eleven of which had appeared in a more or less mutilated form in *Notes and Queries*. The other five have not been published. The present collection consists of the letters in the Avenell Collection that have either not been published, or that have been published only partially in *Notes and Queries*, together with a few others which have apparently never been published, and a few letters that have appeared only in *The Spectator* and other publications. Some of these letters are quoted in the second edition of my *Life of William Cowper* (C. J. Farncombe and Sons, Ltd., 1921).

In cases where I have been able to see the originals I have retained Cowper's spelling and have followed him in giving capital letters to nouns; but it will be noticed that in the later letters Cowper wrote very much as we write now. All the references are to my edition of *The Correspondence of William Cowper*, the second edition of my *Life of William Cowper* (1921), and to *The Poetical Works of William Cowper*, edited by

H. S. Milford (1905), and issued by the Oxford University Press.

Letters to Cowper are scarce, most of them having been destroyed. While preparing this volume for the press, Mrs. Bowden-Smith, of Careys, Brockenhurst, kindly placed in my hands thirteen letters written by her grandfather, the Rev. James Hurdis, to Cowper. The following is a summary of their contents :

1. 1792, Feb. 7. Hurdis says he has desired Johnson the bookseller to forward to Cowper a Tragedy entitled *Sir Thomas More*, and an Essay relative to the arrangement of the Plays of Shakespeare. Both were from Hurdis's pen, and Cowper is asked for his criticism. The following paragraph is interesting in connection with letter No. 28 printed in the present work :

"I dined to-day with Johnson, & had my curiosity much gratified by sitting at table with Dr. Aiken & Mr. Payne [Thomas Paine, author of *The Rights of Man*.] With the appearance of the latter I was surprised. He is a tall, thin man with a face red & somewhat resembling in the inequality of its surface the coat of a Seville orange. His eyes have a strange idiotish obliquity. His hair is thin & was carelessly frized at the sides & tied by a slip of ribbon loosely behind. He put me much in mind of the character of Thersites, & like him did not appear to be much of an Orator. Indeed he often expressed himself in a manner which was inelegant, & both accented & pronounced the words he made use of in an improper manner e.g. *negres pro negroes*. Of the readiness with which he adopts his opinions you may judge when I tell you he boldly asserted that he could form a judgment of any poem by reading *two* lines of it. I told him I had read three books of Mr. Cowper's *Homer*, but had not yet ventured to pass a judgment upon it. I could only report that I had found reason to be well-pleased, as far as I had pursued you. A pamphlet was handed about which appeared to be an awkward piece of waggery ridiculing your preface & first Book. It is not worthy your attention."

2. 1792, Mar. 8. He promises to proceed with his comments on Cowper's *Homer*. He gives some of his family history, and exposes his "simoniacal" Bishop. Sally [Hurdis's sister] has lost her Robin, and Puss is prisoner at the bar. Cowper is asked to write an epitaph on the bird, and, as we know, the favour was granted.
3. " Mar. 18. Cowper is thanked for the Epitaph. Word picture of Sally, who is an "assiduous botanist." Reference to Hurdis's old organ, now in the Hall at Careys, and his miniatures painted for his sister Catharine by Teed of London in 1792, and to Sir John Hawkins's *Life of Samuel Johnson* (1787).
4. " Aug. 15. An affecting letter respecting the death of his sister Catharine. (Ob. 7 Aug., 1792, æt. 24.)
5. " Aug. 31. Written at the time Cowper was Hayley's guest at Eartham. Word portrait of Catharine. A reference to "the eagle's aerie at the top of the cedar" at Eartham, where Cowper and Mrs. Unwin feasted. Hurdis invites Cowper to Bishopstone. Epitaph in verse on "Miss Catharine Hurdis."
6. " Nov. 24. A short letter.
7. 1793, Jan. 29. Reference to Macklin's picture of the Woodman [illustrating a passage in *The Task*]. "It is an admirable performance. A print of it is engraved by Bartolozzi, but it is not equal to the painting."
8. " Mar. 1. Hurdis is a candidate for the Chair of Poetry at Oxford.

9. 1793, April 9. Refers to his chances of election.
10. „ July 13. Mrs. Siddons visits Hurdis. "Her manners are the most gentle and unassuming." She is an admirer of Cowper's poems.
11. „ Oct. 17. Cowper is begged to use his influence in Hurdis's behalf — that is, to ask his friends to vote for Hurdis. [The election took place on Oct. 31. Result: Hurdis, 201; Kett, 180.]
12. 1794, Jan. 14. Is writing his *Oratio Inauguralis*. A "task of no small difficulty to a man who has dealt but little in Latin for the last ten years."
13. „ May 3. Written from Cowley. "Johnny Gilpin has the honour of being suspended at Edmonton upon a sign-post. If I am not mistaken he supplies the place of the Bell. I saw the fact noticed in a proof sheet of Lysons' second volume."

In conclusion, I wish to express my thanks to Dr. Wilfrid Hooper, Mr. Falconer Madan, Mr. George A. Ball, Mr. Kenneth Povey, and others who kindly helped me in various ways while this work was passing through the press.

Cowper School,
Olney, near Bedford.

THOMAS WRIGHT.

1 Jan., 1925.

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LETTERS OF WILLIAM COWPER

1

TO MRS. COWPER.¹

“At the Park House, Hartingfordbury, near
Hartford, Hartfordshire.”

Avenell Col., No. 1.

Hunt[ingdo]n, 4 May, 1767.

My dear Cousin,

Having no Memorial by me, from whence to collect the particulars of the Charity you mention, I can't take upon me to set forth with any Certainty the Nature of it or the Terms on which it is bestowed. To the best of my Remembrance the Sum is five guineas, to be given to the Widow of one Husband, upwards of 60 years of age, having no Children, or none able to maintain her, and incapable of maintaining Herself, who also, while she was in a Capacity to work, behaved herself like a discreet and Industrious Person. I am not sure of all these Requisites, but such in general was the Description of the Object of this Benefaction.

¹ Maria Frances Cecilia (Cowper's first cousin), wife of Major William Cowper. He died in 1769, she died in 1797.

Mr. Thurlow¹ was the Person from whom I used to receive it. He was at that time a trustee under the will of Bishop Williams, who I think was the Founder of the Exhibition. I was then very intimate with Mr. Thurlow, and it was at his Request that I endeavoured to find persons properly qualified to receive the Bounty. But my Connection with him having entirely ceased, (for I have never had the least Correspondence with him since my Journey to St. Albans)² it would be extremely painfull to me to deal with him as if upon the Terms of a Friendship which I look upon as absolutely extinct. The Extinction of it has been owing I imagine, on His part, to a Variety of much more important Subjects and Pursuits, and on mine to a total Difference from what I know to be his Principles and Practise. I think Mr. Cowper must know him well enough to apply to him in such a case as this, which is rather doing a Favour than asking one, for unless his Stock of old Pensioners is increased, he will be glad of a new Recommendation.

My dear Cousin, may the Blessed God who has given it you, continually build you up—& establish you in that most Holy Faith you entertain so warmly. To know that we are lost, and that the Son of God has alone wrought out our Redemp-

¹ In 1778 Lord Chancellor and Baron Thurlow. The allusion appears to be to one of the charities founded by John Williams, Bishop of Lincoln, and later, Archbishop of York. He died in 1650.

² See *Life*, p. 52.

tion, is to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, & this Knowledge is eternal Life. I daresay you condole with me upon poor A——'s Publication.¹ Surely the wrong side of the grand Climacteric is no season for Rhiming. And that Holy and Blessed Name too, at which he bows the Head upon a Sabbath, is treated with as little Reverence as that of Mahomet ; he has indeed packed them and jumbled them together in a manner very shocking to a Christian Reader. May God give him to stand in awe of that Name which is exalted above every Name whether in Earth or Heaven & which is fragrant and refreshing as Ointment poured forth to them that beleive² in it.

I answer for Unwin,³ though he is not at home that he will be very happy in an Acquaintance with my Friend William at Camb[ridg]e.

My love to Mr. Cowper, &c.

Beleive me ever Yours

(Signature cut off.)

¹ Poems and Translations by Ashley Cowper, the poet's uncle. They were published in 1767. Ashley Cowper was then in his sixty-sixth year.

² In these pages Cowper's spelling is followed. It will be noticed, too, that he sometimes begins a sentence with a small letter.

³ William Cawthorne Unwin (son of Rev. Morley Unwin), born in 1744.

2

TO MRS. MADAN.

“ Stafford Row, Near the Queen's House,
Westminster.”¹

Avenell Col., No. 2.

Huntingdon, 10 July, 1767.

My dear Aunt Madan,

We have lost Mr. Unwin² by a very awfull and afflictive Dispensation. As he was riding to his Cure last Sunday sen'night in the Morning, his Horse took Fright, ran away with him homeward, and in a Village about a mile off he was flung to the ground with such Violence, that his Scull was fractured in the most desperate manner. He lived about 4 days, contrary to the Expectation of the Surgeons, who pronounced him within a few Hours of Death at the first Sight of him. But we trust there was Hope in his latter End. His Senses seemed to be restored to him at short Intervals, not only for his own Benefit, but for the Comfort and Satisfaction of his Friends. For at those times he was enabled to utter Truths, which before, he could never be brought to the Beleif of. He was one of those many poor deluded

¹ This letter is printed incorrectly in *Notes and Queries* (16 July, 1904, p. 43).

² Rev. Morley Unwin, with whom Cowper resided at Huntingdon. See *Life*, p. 75.

Persons, whom Dr. Clarke¹ has infected with his Antichristian Errors, and consequently denied the Divinity of our Lord and the infinite Merit of his Sufferings. But upon his Death Bed he was heard to say, "Jesus Christ is God, and therefore he can save me" those words were frequently in his mouth—Very God of Very God—and, Jesus Christ died for us. So that he seemed to be pleading these Foundation Truths against the Charges of the Adversary, and an accusing Conscience. Surely then we do not vainly flatter ourselves, when we Hope that the Lord, though he was pleased to take a dreadfull course with him, yet sealed him effectually for his own. By this means a Door is opened to us to seek an Abode under the Sound of the Gospel. Mrs. Unwin has determined to do so, thinking it her indispensible Duty. accordingly we have employed Dr. Conyers,² Mr. Newton³ of Olney and our Friend Haweis⁴ who lay here last night, to enquire for us. Pray for us, my dear Aunt, that it may please the Good Shepherd to lead us by the Footsteps of the Flock, and to feed us in his own Pasture; for my soul within me is sick of the spiritless unedifying Ministry at Huntingdon. It is a matter of the utmost Indifference to us where we settle, provided

¹ Dr. Samuel Clarke (1675—1729), eminent philosopher and theologian. He was a semi-Arian.

² Rev. Dr. Conyers, of Helmsley, Yorkshire, brother-in-law of "John Thornton the Great."

³ Rev. John Newton, curate of Olney.

⁴ Rev. Dr. Haweis, of Aldwinkle, Northants.

it be within the Sound of the glad Tidings of Salvation. I shall be much obliged to you, if you will beg my Friend Martin¹ to assist us, whose extensive knowledge of those places where the gospel is ministered, may perhaps enable him under God, to direct us.

I am a sort of adopted Son in this Family, where Mrs. Unwin has always treated me with Parental Tenderness: Therefore by the Lord's leave I shall still continue a Member of it. Our Aim and End are the same, the Means of Grace and the Hopes of Glory; so yt there seems to be no Reason why we should be parted.

When I said yt all Places are alike to us, I should have excepted London, to which we have both objections yt cannot easily be removed.

I beg my affectionate Respects to all my Friends of the name of Madan, and am

my Dear Aunt,

Yours I trust in the only Saviour,

W^M. COWPER.

¹ Rev. Martin Madan, son of Cowper's Aunt Judith and Col. Madan, M.P. See *Life*, p. 48, *et seq.*

3

TO MRS. MADAN.¹

Avenell Col., No. 3.

[*Huntingdon*] 18 July, 1767.

I wish, my dear Aunt,² that any of my Letters may be made as effectual to your Consolation, as your last was to mine. I had for many days stood in great need of some spiritual Refreshment, having walked in Darkness, and found it a Trial of my utmost Strength to trust ever so little in the Lord, and stay upon my God. But his mercy is ever watchfull over us, to pour Oil and Wine into our Wounds either with his own Hand, or by the Ministry of his faithfull Servants. I know he will recompense you for it, for though my Prayers are wretched things, and seem to myself generally to be little more than Lip-labour, yet he hears them graciously in my own behalf, and will not therefore turn away from them when they are preferred in yours. I may say safely that I *know* he hears them, because I know by the Gift of his free Mercy that I have an all-prevailing High Priest and Intercessor at his Right Hand for ever, Jesus Christ the Righteous. therefore though I am nothing and less than nothing & Vanity, yet the mighty God, the everlasting Lord, the Creator of

¹ Partly printed in *Notes and Queries* (16 July, 1904, p. 43).

² Cowper's aunt Judith, who married Col. Madan.

the Ends of the Earth, will hear me. Oh! to what Privileges are worms advanced, and how do the Extremes of Power & Weakness, Purity & Sinfullness meet together by the Mediation of the Man Christ Jesus! The Lord give me some little Sense of his Goodness in this wonderfull Reconciliation!

I am afraid at present to put a Stop to the Enquiries of my Friends after a House for us, though I think I shall soon be able to do it with Security. Mr. Newton has sent us an Account of one, which seems by his Description to be the very thing we want, at a village called Emberton, within about a mile of his Church at Olney. He is in Treaty for us with the Owner of it who lives it seems at a great Distance, so that we cannot have his definite Answer in less than 10 days or a Fortnight. But there seems to be no Probability of any Objection to us on his part, nor are any Difficulties likely to arise on ours. It will be empty at Michaelmass. Its Situation in this part of the world, recommends it to Mrs. Unwin, who would wish to be near her Son,¹ and to me who would wish to be not altogether seperated from my Brother. The Lord will dispose of us according to his goodness. Mr. Newton seems to have conceived a great Desire to have us for neighbours, and I am sure we shall think ourselves highly favoured to be committed to the care of such a

¹ William Cawthorne Unwin. In December of this year (1767) he became curate of Comberton, near Cambridge.

Pastor. May we be enabled to hold him in double Honour for his work's sake, according to the will of the great Shepherd of us all !

I have a great Regard for Lady Hesketh,¹ a sincere affection ; and am therefore glad of Opportunities to lead her thoughts, as far as the Lord shall enable me, to the Things that belong to her Peace, so that I never write to her without attempting it. But there are wide Gaps in our Correspondence, which nevertheless proceeds after a Fashion. I received from her very lately a kind Invitation to Ealing but Necessity is laid upon me, and I cannot accept those Offers. Though she is everything that's amiable among men, yet I fear the veil is upon her Heart, for I have never heard her speak Shibboleth plainly, nor does the Abundance of her poor Heart seem to be what it should be. yet the Lord may have purposes of grace toward her, which I beseech him to manifest in his own time. She sent me some time since the Stanzas you mention, which I think are exceeding good. My dear Aunt ! how lovely must be the Spirits of just men made perfect, since Creatures so lovely in our Eyes, may yet have the wrath of God abiding on them. The Lord avert it from Her and number her with ye glorious assembly before his Throne for ever.

Your affectionate Nephew,

WM. COWPER.

¹ Cowper's cousin. . Daughter of Mr. Ashley Cowper.

4

TO MRS. MADAN.¹

“Stafford Row near the Queen's House,
Westminster.”

Avenell Col., No. 4.

[*Huntingdon*] 10 August, 1767.

My dear Aunt,

On Monday last we went to see our Friend Newton at Olney, and to take a View of the Place where we trust the Lord has fix'd the Bounds of our Habitation. One House² is fairly and clearly open to us, but it is a Mile distant from Olney Church, and the Walk rough & stony and liable to Floods, which is a very unfavourable Circumstance to Mrs. & Miss Unwin, though it would seldom be an Impediment to me. Beside this, we hope to have a Chance to succeed Mr. Newton in his present Dwelling, which in every respect will exactly suit us. If we fail there, there is another House in the Town which the owner of it offers to repair for us. Either of the latter would be preferred by *us*, but if *the Lord* have appointed the former, it will be our Business to take Possession of it & be thankfull. Indeed I am weary of this place, more so perhaps than I ought to be: but I

¹ Partly printed in *Notes and Queries* (30 July, 1904, pp. 82 and 83).

² The house at Emberton.

want to be with the Lord's People, having great need of quickening Intercourse and the Communion of his saints. Possibly, the black and shocking Aspersions which our Neighbours here amuse themselves with casting upon our Names and Conduct, may add to my Impatience to be gone. Things which our Soul abhors are imputed to us, and by those who never meet us but with Smiles. This ought not, I know, to disturb us, nor does it much, but it is a Trial, and Trials are seldom agreeable to our weak and feeble Spirits. On the other Hand, the Lord seems to have filled the hearts of Mr. and Mrs. Newton with Christian Tenderness & affection towards us. The number of the flock there is considerable, and they all dwell together as becomes Brethren, in Unity. So that the Lord seems to be drawing us out of this Wilderness with one hand, & driving us out with the other. So be it, O thou God of our Salvation, only let thy Presence go along with us, for men & means are Nothing without Thee!

I send you an Extract of a Letter from Unwin at Bristol, giving an Account of the Death of a Child at Clifton about a mile from Bristol, the son of ye clerk of that Parish. I think it will please you. He died aged 8 years & 8 months. About 2 Months before his Death, he was for some time in ye Church yard with his Father, a day or two after he said to his Mother, "Mother I was so happy t'other day in ye Church yard yt I did not

know what to do, or how to account for it. I was forced to say, Praised be God!" On Sunday morning about One o'clock he was suddenly taken ill with a violent Pain in his Bowels; his sufferings were extremely acute during his whole Illness, w^{ch} lasted little more than 48 Hours, during w^{ch} time at Intervals he would pray with great Fervency. To his nurse on Monday morning early, he said "Nanny, I have nothing more to do with Books and Learning now—I have laid 'em all aside." Even in his ravings which were frequent, he was either talking of his Books, or praying earnestly & singing Hymns. On Monday he desir'd his mother to read to him the 21st Psalm, or rather, said He, let me read it. He took the Book in hand but his Eyes were already dim—He then desired his mother again to read it, & afterwards to Pray with him. She did so, & he joined with Fervor. At one time he lay quite still & calm. My dear, said his mother, how do you do? are you in Pain? Oh no, said he, I am very easy and very well. On Tuesday night about 2 Hours before he died, his Mother was for applying fresh warm Flannels to his Bowels, upon . . . hing, he said, Oh you disturb me in my Journey . . . 2 hours after he died without a struggle or a . . . in the Midst of a Hymn.—The Death of this . . .¹ Child made me take particular notice of 2 stanzas of a H[y]mn

¹ Torn away, the seal being removed.

in] Dodderidges Collection, wch I met with yesterday,

Thy Saints in earlier Life remov'd
In sweeter accents sing,
And bless the Swiftness of their Flight,
That bore them to their King.
The Burthens of a lengthen'd Day
With Patience we would bear,
Till evening's welcome hour shall shew
We were our Master's care.

Our Friends here define a Methodist to be—One who committs every Sin he can think of and invents New Ones every Day,—That he may be saved by Faith.

How truly pitiable is their Blindness and Enmity to the Truth!

Yrs my Dear Aunt, in a way they little dream of,

W^M. COWPER.

N.B. I had always rather have double Letters than single ones from my Xtian Friends, whether frank'd or not.

² Rev. Philip Doddridge, Nonconformist divine and hymn-writer (1702—1751).

5

TO MRS. MADAN.¹

Avenell Col., No. 5.

Olney, 26 Sept., 1767.

My dear Aunt,

It is fit I should acknowledge the Goodness of the Lord in bringing me to this Place, abounding with Palm Trees and Wells of living water. The Lord put it into my Heart to desire to partake of his Ordinances and to dwell with his People, and has graciously given me my Heart's Desire: Nothing can exceed the Kindness and Hospitality with which we are received here by his dear Servant Newton: and to be brought under the Ministry of so wise and faithfull a Steward of his Holy Mysteries is a Blessing for which I can never be sufficiently thankfull. May our heavenly Father grant that our Souls may thrive and flourish in some Proportion to the abundant Means of grace we enjoy: for the whole Day is but one continued Opportunity either of seeking him or conversing about the things of his Kingdom. I find it a difficult matter when surrounded with the Blessings of Providence, to remember that I seek a Country, and that this is not the Place of my Rest. God glorifies himself by bringing Good out

¹ Partly printed in *Notes and Queries*, (30 July, 1904, p. 83).

of Evil, but it is the Reproach of Man that he is able and always inclined to produce Evil out of the greatest Blessings. The Lord has dealt graciously with me since I came, and I trust I have in two instances had much delightfull Communion with him: yet this Liberty of Access was indulged to me in such a way, as to teach me at the same time his great Care that I might not turn it to my Prejudice. I expected that in some Sermon or Exposition I should find him, and that the Lips of this excellent Minister would be the Instrument by which the Lord would work upon & soften my obdurate Heart. But he saw my proneness to idolize the Means, and to praise the Creature more than the Creator, & therefore though he gave me the thing I hoped for, yet he conveyed it to me in a way which I did not look to. On the last Sabbath morning at a Prayer Meeting¹ before Service, while the poor Folks were singing a Hymn and my Vile Thoughts were rambling to the Ends of the Earth, a single Sentence (and is there no Pity in Jesus^s breast?) seized my Attention at once, and my Heart within me seemed to return Answer, Yes, or I had never been here. The Sweetness of this visit lasted almost thro' the Day, and I was once more enabled to weep under a sense of the Mercies of a God in Jesus.—On Thursday Morning I attended a Meeting of Children, and found that Passage “Out of the

¹ Held at “The Great House,” Olney, an old mansion near the church.

mouth of Babes and Sucklings thou hast ordained Praise" verified in a Sense I little thought of. For at almost every Word they spoke in answer to the several Questions proposed to them, my Heart burned within me, and melted into Tears of Gratitude and Love.

I thought the Singularity of this Dispensation worth your Notice, and having communicated it, am in a manner obliged to break off rather abruptly. Mr. Newton has just brought me one of Martin's pamphlets which makes it impossible for me to write any longer. Pray tell him he is a bit of a Traytor for not sending my *Narrative*¹ at the same time with his own, for I want much to shew it to Mr. and Mrs. Newton.

Yrs my dear Aunt affectionately,

WM. COWPER.

Mrs. Newton begs to be remember'd to you.

¹ *The Memoir of the Early Life of William Cowper.* See *Life*, p. 68 *et seq.* It was published in 1816, that is, after Cowper's death.

6

TO MRS. MADAN.¹

Avenell Col., No. 6.

Olney, 15 Oct., 1767.

My dear Aunt,

I should sooner have acknowledg'd your last Favour, had not many Circumstances concurred to put by my Intention to do it from time to time. We are many of us pack'd together in a small House, our own not being yet ready for us, and though everything that is not in a manner impracticable, is done to accommodate us, yet Convenience and Opportunity for writing are the scarcer upon that Account. I have taken a Journey too since I received it with Mr. Newton, to a Place called Dunton² about 25 miles from hence, and within about 12 of Berkhamsted. Our Visit was to the Rev^d. Mr. Moody,³ an old Gospel Minister, whom Mr. Newton assists annually with a Sermon. From his Orchard I could see some Hills within a small Distance of my Native Place, which formerly I have often visited. The Sight of them affected me much, and awakened in me a lively Recollection of the Goodness of the Lord in caring for and Protecting me in those dark and dangerous

¹ Partly printed in *Notes and Queries* (30 July, 1904, p. 83).

² Village 4 miles N.E. of Winslow, Bucks.

³ Rev. James Moody, rector of Dunton, who died 22nd Aug., 1792. There is a memorial to him in Dunton Church.

Days of Ignorance and Enmity against him, and his own Blessed Word teaches me to draw an Inference from those Premises of more Worth than Millions of Gold and Silver. If while I was an Enemy he loved me, much more reason have I to rest assured of his Love, being reconciled by the Blood of his Son. I found myself at this place not entirely among Strangers as I had expected to be. The Old Gentleman was formerly acquainted with my Father both at the University and at Berkhamsted, and his Wife travelled with me from thence to London in the stage Coach above 20 years since. It pleased the Lord to take Occasion by these seemingly trivial Circumstances, to make my Childhood and Youth in their most affecting Colours pass in review before me, and these were followed by such a tender Recollection of my dear Father and all his Kindness to me, the Aimiable-ness and Sweetness of his Temper & Character, that I went out into the Orchard and burst forth into Praise and Thanksgiving to God for having made me the Son of a Parent whose Remembrance was so sweet to me. I have frequently thought (and expressed myself with more Anxiety than perhaps was right) upon the Subject of his State towards God at the Time of his Dissolution. I was not with him, and they who were, were not likely to be very observant of any Evangelical Words that might possibly fall from his Lips in his last Moments. He was everything that was

excellent and Praiseworthy towards Man, but to One who has been enabled to see Jesus as the *Alone* Saviour, this is no Evidence of the Acceptance of any Man. I am willing to hope, that the Lord who pities all our Infirmities, and knows all our Desires was pleased to fill my Heart and my Mouth with Thanksgivings on his behalf, that I might have a comfortable Expectation of Meeting him before the Throne hereafter. I could hardly help giving Thanks to Jesus that he had numbered him with his redeemed People, though Fearfulness to offend and a Consciousness that I had no right to pry into the Secrets of the Almighty, or to expect Satisfaction upon such a Subject, restrained me. I would not build Hay or Stubble upon this or any other Experience, nor lay more upon it than it will bear, but I am willing to Hope the best concerning him, to wait patiently for greater Certain[ty in] a Life to come, and in the meanwhile to rest satisfied that the Judge of All the Earth will do right.

I shall very gladly write to Mrs. Maitland¹ as soon as we are settled, and if possible before. Pray give my Love to her, and assure her that I will take ye earliest Opportunity of doing it. My Cousin Maria² will think I have quite forgot her. But I only wait to get into our own House, when I

¹ Penelope, daughter of Cowper's Aunt, Judith Madan. She married General Maitland.

² Maria Frances Cecilia, wife of Major William Cowper, of The Park, Hertford, another daughter of Judith Madan. Letter No. 1 was written to her.

shall be more at large and less liable to Interruptions. Mrs. Unwin presents her Respects to you, and thinks herself much obliged to you for ye Passage relating to her in your last. I am My Dear Aunt

Your affectionate Nephew

WM. COWPER.

7

TO MRS. MADAN.¹

Avenell Col., No. 12.

Olney, 1 Mar., 1768.

My dear Aunt,

Your Silence makes me fear for your Health. If it be owing to Illness, may the Lord sanctify it to you, and abundantly compensate to you all your bodily Sufferings by the Manifestation of his gracious Presence. We are at last settled

¹ Partly printed in *Notes and Queries* (13 Aug., 1904, p. 122).

in our own Mansion.¹ The Lord provided it for us, and we hope has said concerning it—Peace be to this House. He has called both our Servants and brought them I trust to an effectual Acquaintance with the Savior and themselves since we came to Olney. The Man Servant² you may remember is the same that attended me at St. Albans. What various Methods does the good Shepherd use, and how wonderfull is he in many of those Dispensations by w'ch he brings his People within the Sound of ye Gospel. We had no sooner taken Possession of our own House, than I found myself called to lead the Pray'rs of the Family, a formidable undertak'g you may imagine to a Temper & Spirit like mine. I trembled at the Apprehension of it, and was so dreadfully harrass'd in the Conflict I sustaind upon this Occasion in the first Week, that my Health was not a little affected by it. But there was no Remedy, and I hope the Lord brought me to that point, to chuse Death rather than a Retreat from Duty. In my first Attempt he was sensibly present with me, and has since favour'd me with every perceptible Assistance. My Fears begin to wear off, I get rather more Liberty of Speech at least, if not of Spirit, and have some Hope that having open'd my Mouth he will never suffer it to be closed again, but rather give Increase of Utterance and Zeal to serve him. How much of that Monster Self has he taken Occasion to

¹ Orchard Side, Olney, now The Cowper Museum.

² Samuel Roberts.

shew me by this Incident. Pride Ostentation, and Vain glory have always been my Hindrance in these Attempts. These be at the Root of that Evil Tree which the world good natur'dly calls Bashfulness. Evil indeed in the Character of a Disciple of Christ. May our gracious Teacher mortify them all to Death and never leave me 'till he has made the Dumb to speak, and the Stammering Tongue like the Pen of a ready Writer!

My dear Friend Mrs. Unwin is wonderfully restor'd. Her Recovery, of which there seems to be no doubt, is as extraordinary and as evident an answer to Pray'r, as any that has fallen within my Experience. The Lord make me thankfull to him for the Continuance of this and all his Mercies, which I deserve every day to be deprived of, but he is an unchangeable God and delights in shewing Mercy.

I am ashamed of my Behaviour to Maria whose kind Enquirys after Mrs. U[nwin] I have never yet answer'd. I shall write to her soon in all Probability, and beg that if you have an Opportunity in the meantime you will present my Love to her & tell her so.

Remember me to Mrs. Maitland and beleive me my dear Aunt

Yours Affectionately

W^M. COWPER.

8

TO MRS. COWPER (of the Park).¹

Avenell Col., No. 7.

Olney, 15 April, 1768.

Dear Cousin,

Your Letter brought me the first News of Mr. Cowper's Success at Hartford.² I heartily wish that all the Members of a certain august assembly, were equally worthy of their office and the Confidence reposed in them : which will be the case when they are all nominated and chosen in the same disinterested manner, out of mere respect to their Honour and Integrity, and never before. I was never much skilled in Politics and am now less versed in them than ever, the Olney Folks are all mere Ignoramus³ upon this subject, and the wind seldom blows any body this way, that knows more of the matter than themselves. But this I know, that when I see a great Building full of Cracks, weather beaten and mouldering apace, and much declined from the Perpendicular the Down-fall of that House is not far distant, unless it be set right again by an extraordinary Repair. This is too much the case, I am afraid with our poor Country. I am neither a Prophet nor the Son of

¹ Partly printed in *Notes and Queries* (16 July, 1904, p. 42).

² Her husband, Major William Cowper, was elected M.P. for Hertford Borough, 17th March, 1768.

a Prophet, but I know that the natural Tendency of Iniquity is to Ruin, and every Kingdom that has fallen in pieces in the past ages of the world, gives Testimony to the Truth of the Assertion. May God raise up many to intercede with him in behalf of a Sinfull Land, for I am sure if the Pray'rs of his own People, those that Love and Fear him, do not prevail for a Blessing, not all the Contrivance of the Wisest Heads amongst us will be able to divert the Storm that threatens us.

My dear Cousin ! how happy are they who have been taught of God that this is not their Rest, that here they have no continuing City ! Who can look from this Mass of perishing things to a City which hath Foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God. Whose Hearts glow with a comfortable Hope, that amongst those many Mansions which Jesus tells us are in his Fathers House, there is One reserved for them where no Fear of Dissolution and Ruin shall ever find them out, where nothing shall enter that can defile them, consequently nothing that can grieve them, and of which Jesus himself, the unchangeable and everlasting Savior, is the chief Corner Stone. Blessed are we indeed, if God has given us this precious Hope through Faith in his Son's Name, this Hope that purifies the Soul even as He is pure, makes all Sin hatefull, and all that is Holy and according to the Will of God, lovely and desirable in our Eyes and is day by day bringing us to a greater Meetness

for an Inheritance among the Saints in Light. May you and I and all dear to us be made intimately acquainted here with the things that belong to our Peace, have more and more Experience of the transforming Power of the grace of Christ, and follow him through this poor fleeting World, that we may rejoice with him for ever and reign with him in his own heavenly Kingdom.

I beg you will give my Love to my Friend the New Member and to all my cousins great and small and beleive me affectionately yours

(Signature cut off.)

9

TO MRS. MADAN.¹

Avenell Col., No. 9

Olney, 11 June, 1768.

My dear Aunt,

After so long a Silence to write only because I have need of your Assistance, is very Selfish and like myself. But so it is—If I remember right, I wrote you word some time since that we thought ourselves happy that the Lord had been pleased to call both our Servants to the Knowledge of himself, upon our first Settlement at *Olney*. The Man Servant stands fast, and his Case has been from the Beginning I trust clearly a gracious one. the Maid whose Experiences were at the best of a mixt nature, has since fallen away so dreadfully as to occasion much doubt whether she ever had any grace at all, and we have been forced to dismiss her at the shortest notice. The poor Town of *Olney* furnishes nothing like a Servant to supply her Place. If you know or should hear of any one that is fit to be Cook in a small Family and that will accept of a Place where there is no other Maid Servant kept, we shall be exceedingly obliged to you, if you will direct her hither. Her work will be very easy, as we have

¹ Partly printed in *Notes and Queries* (13 Aug., 1904, p. 123).

no Dining or Supping Company, and wash nothing at home but Table and Kitchen Linen. In case of illness or any other Hindrance she will always be sure of Occasional Help. In short she must be, as Mrs. Unwin tells me, the Term is, a Maid of all Work, there will be no Difficulties made about Wages, and she will be paid for her journey down. Only she must expect no Vales.

I had a Letter from Lady Hesketh by the last Post to inform me that she had just read my *Narrative*.¹ She seems to have been much affected by it, and I should have been very happy if she had been enabled to learn from it the only Lesson it is intended to teach, the Sovereignty of God's free grace in the deliverance of a Sinfull Soul from the nethermost Hell. But the Lord has not seen fit to bless it to that Effect, for she says she cannot see how such a Life as mine had been could *Merit* such bitter Sufferings at the Hand of a Mercifull God, and bestows all the Honour of the Repentance that follow'd them entirely upon Myself. How is the word of the Redeemer conceal'd from the natural . . . so that though his grace be as evidently display'd in the Salvation of a lost Sinner as his power is in the works of Creation, not a Beam breaks through to enlighten it, 'till his own Hand takes away the veil!

My dear Aunt beleive me your very Affectionate Nephew

W^M. COWPER.

¹ See footnote p. 16,

10

TO MRS. MADAN.¹

Avenell Col., No. 8.

Olney, 18 June, 1768.

Thank you, my dear Aunt, for the trouble you are so kind as to take to furnish us with a Servant. Mrs. Unwin begs I would present her Respects to you and assure you of the Sense she has of your Kindness upon the Occasion. I forgot in my last to mention one Qualification in the servant Mrs. Unwin wants viz that she must be able to get up small Linen: as to wages Mrs Unwin would be willing to give £8 a year, but not more, as that far exceeds the Wages of any Servant in this Place. We would rather leave it to the Lord to send us whom he pleases than insist upon having a converted Person. Who knows but He may take Occasion by this Opportunity to bring a stray Sheep Home to the Fold and add One to the Number of his People.

I know not by what means Lady Hesketh heard that there was such a thing in the World as my *Narrative*; but the news of it having reached her, she wrote to me to beg a sight of it. At first I was very unwilling to shew it to her, but having

¹ Printed with a few errors in *Notes and Queries* (13 Aug., 1904, p. 123.)

consulted with Mr. Newton about the Propriety of doing so, and finding Him of Opinion that it might be done safely, I consented; but restrained it absolutely to her own Perusal, and she assures me no eye has seen it but her own. I have always thought it unfit to be trusted in the Hands of an unenlighten'd Person, the Lord having dealt with me in a way so much out of the common Course of his Proceeding, nor do I intend that any such shall hereafter read it. However, if she has got no Light from it, I do not perceive that she has been stumbled by it and it may possibly at some future time be made usefull to her. Temporal Trouble is often the Forerunner of Spiritual; and I pray the Lord to sanctify her Sufferings to her, that it may be so with her.

We have had a Holiday week at Olney. The Association of Baptist Ministers met here on Wednesday. We had three Sermons from them that day, and one on Thursday, besides Mr. Newton's in the Evening. One of the Preachers was Mr. Booth,¹ who has lately published an excellent Work called the *Reign of Grace*. He was bred a Weaver, and has been forced to work with his Hands hitherto for the Maintenance of himself and a large Family. But the Lord who has given him excellent Endowments has now called him from the small Congregation he ministered to in

¹ Abraham Booth (1734—1806), Pastor of a Particular Baptist Church in London. See his *Life* by W. Jones, 1808, and his *Works*, 3 vols, 1813.

Nottinghamshire, to supply Mr. Burford's¹ place in London. It was a comfortable sight to see thirteen Gospel Ministers together. Most of them either Preach'd or Pray'd and all that did so approved themselves sound in the Word and Doctrine, whence a good Presumption arises in favour of the rest. I should be glad if the Partition wall between Xtians of different Denominations would everywhere fall down flat as it has done at Olney. The Dissenters here, most of them at least who are serious, forget that our Meeting House has a Steeple to it, and we that theirs has none. This shall be the case universally, May the Lord hasten it in his time.

I am, My dear Aunt,

Your very affectionate Nephew,

W^M. COWPER.

I am sorry for poor . . . —thoughtless as a Child he stands upon the shore of Eternity, and laughs in Circumstances that are frightfull to those that understand them. Indeed my Heart was troubled when I read that part of your Letter which relates to him.

She must come to Newport by the Northampton Stage which puts up at the George in Smithfield. Newport is 5 miles from Olney. If we know of her coming beforehand Mrs. Unwin will send a person to meet her.

¹ Samuel Burford, of Goodman's Fields and Currier's Hall, London. He died in 1768, and was buried in Bunhill Fields.

11

TO MRS. MADAN.¹

Avenell Col., No. 10.

Olney, 9 July, 1768.

My dear Aunt,

You and We and poor Mary Powel have all lost our Labour. After a Weeks trial Mrs. Unwin found her absolutely unqualified in every Respect both as Cook & Housemaid and unable to do the least thing aright. She has accordingly paid her for the Time and the Expence of her Journey back again, and she has taken her leave of Olney this Morning. what Improvements she may make hereafter is uncertain, but 40 shillings a year is as high as her Pretensions can reasonably soar at present. She was blamed for nothing but deceiving you, as she must needs have known that the Wages agreed for were more than she could possibly earn by her Services. This Reproof together with some pious Advice which Mrs. Unwin gave her at Parting she took very quietly, and seemed rather glad of her Dismission, finding no doubt that she had undertaken what she was not fit for. We are both sorry you have had so much Trouble to so little purpose, but we trust the Hand of the Lord was in it, for her Place is now

¹ Partly printed in *Notes and Queries* (27 Aug., 1904, p. 162).

supplied by a very gracious young woman, one of our own People, whom Mrs. Unwin would have taken at first, only she feared that her Health & Strength would not be sufficient for the work. But if the Lord has design'd her for it he will give her strength equal to it: She has a great affection for us which is no small Recommendation and is every way qualified for her Place.

It is well for us, my dear Aunt, that having a gracious Master who has no need of our Services, he does not dismiss us for Insufficiency. Though our very best Performances fall so far short of what he is entitled to yet he accepts them, and does not rebuke us even for the worst. The Little we are enabled sometimes to render to him we first receive from Himself, the Desire and the Power are derived from Him; yet he continues us in his Family, treats us as Children rather than as Servants, satisfies us with the Fullness of his House and clothes us with his own Raiment, the Righteousness of Jesus. Blessed and happy are they that belong to this Family, they shall never hear even of their willfull Faults except in a Way of Fatherly Chastisement, and in his own time, their Master & Lord will make them Heirs with his own most beloved Son, of an Inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away.

I hope my Friend Martin is restored to health, it was a great Disappointment to us that he could

not come with L^d Dartmouth¹ as he intended.
Pray give my Love to him, & accept of the same
yourself together with Mrs. Unwin's best Respects.
Yours, my Dear Aunt with true affection

W^M. COWPER.

¹ The second Earl of Dartmouth, "One who wears a coronet and prays." (*Truth*, line 378). He lent Cowper books, and several times visited him at Olney. They were schoolfellows at Westminster.

12

To MRS. COWPER.

Avenell Col., No. 11.

Olney, 8 May, 1779.

My dear Cousin,

I wish the Post would have allowed me to acknowledge the Receipt of the Bank Bills sooner, which arrived safe this Afternoon. But it is impossible that a Letter written in answer to one received at *Olney* on Friday should reach the Place of its Destination before Monday. I mention this, lest you should think I had neglected to send you the earliest Advice, which, on such an Occasion, would be unpardonable. The Executor's inscrutable Objections to negotiating this Business¹ himself, have occasion'd you and Lady Hesketh a great deal of Trouble, for which I am much concern'd. I am much obliged to you for the part you have taken in it, & must beg you to make for me the same Acknowledgment to her, and to tell her how sensible I am of her Kindness in taking it up when Mr. Hunt had dropp'd it. My Aunt will accept of my affectionate Respects which, join'd with Mrs Unwin's to Her & to yourself, concludes me your Obliged & Aff^{te} Kinsman

WM, COWPER.

¹ This letter refers apparently to the payment of the legacy of £100 left to Cowper by the will of Sir Thomas Hesketh (husband of Lady Hesketh) who died in 1778.

13

TO REV^D. JOHN NEWTON, Hoxton, London

[*Olney*] 2 Dec^r 1780

[Commencement of letter missing.]

Weary of Transcribing, I shall find perhaps some Refreshment in scribbling a little *de Novo*. I send you my Tale¹ which has made a Shoot or two since I wrote last, and had I kept it longer by me, would probably have continued growing to the last. It is long enough however . . . Tale, and, if it serves the saluta[ry] Purpose of making this one Scheme ridiculous as it is odious, will pay me well for my Pains, if indeed it can be said to have cost me any, for from first to last it has served me merely as an Amusement.

I do not know that Mr. Johnson² is in any Degree deserving of such a Suspicion, but I have learn'd by experience that Printers will sometimes take Liberties with a copy, and mingle with it somewhat of their own. I shall be obliged to you therefore if you will be so kind as to preserve my Muse immaculate, and not [permit it] to be injured by a Thelypthorian Mixture. I am not so Pragmatical (as the Phrase is) to suppose that Mr. Johnson has less wit than I, it is possible, very

¹ *Anti-Thelyphthora, a Tale in Verse.*

² Joseph Johnson, the publisher.

possible, he may have much more. But I once met with a Printer who served me such a Trick, and was at the same time as illiterate a Blockhead as ever presumed to tread upon a poor Poet's Toe. I am much obliged to you for your Obstetrical Assistance upon this Occasion, and am pleased with the Thought that you will rejoice with me if the enclosed should be of Service for, of all the Publications that have appeared since I could Read my own Name, that in Question seems to me the most pernicious, and the most deserving of the Lash of Satyr. I have spared the Author's Person^t as much as possible, but the connection between Self and Self's Book is so close, y^t it is hardly possible to Smite One without Touching the other.

Many Thanks for the Oysters which are come by Mr Sample. the Clook shall be taken care of. Mrs Unwin has mentioned Mrs Cardell to her Brother. I acknowledge the Receipt of Mrs Newton's Letter & shall do it more at large hereafter. If you think anything so Local as the Tything time Ditty² worth your having, I will send it

Y^{rs} my dear Sir;

Quite weary W^M. COWPER.

¹ Rev. Martin Madan, author of *Thelyphthora*, against which Cowper wrote *Anti-Thelyphthora*.

² *The Yearly Distress*. See Milford's Ed. of the Poems, p. 299.

14

To JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.¹

“Great Queen Street, Lincolns Inn Fields,
London.”

[*Olney*], 27 May, 1781.

My dear friend,

I am to thank you for the finest Maccarel I ever saw or tasted, a singular treat at Olney, to which place the best are never imported, nor the worst till they are good for nothing. We live upon the banks of the Ouse, much celebrated in pastoral song, and a River so beautifull and so beautifully bordered, that it may well suggest poetical Ideas to any man that has but a moderate share of Fancy. It may even suggest the Idea of fish, and might for aught I know furnish the Reality were it not most unmercifully poach'd and plunderd from one End of the year to the other. As it is, it is a much better subject for a Poet than an Angler, and if I was writing Verses upon it, I could say,

Here comes the Pike the Tyrant of the stream,
there goes the Tench and the broad sided Bream,

but it would be a mere fiction, and the poet might as well expect to catch salmon and Trout in

¹ Apparently unpublished.

Helicon, as anything worth dressing in the Ouse. But I have a River in great Queen street, which, communicating with the sea, makes amends for all.

It is possible that I ought to have received a letter from you by last Wednesday's post. But the Courier thought proper to lose the Bag which contained it, if you sent one, a little on this side Newport. If any other Bag had been missing I should have suspected that it was not honestly lost: but I think no man who knows what money is, and how little we deal in that commodity here, would risk his neck in such a cause, especially when he had other Bags at his command. If you wrote, I thank you, though I shall never see your letter—if you did not, I can only say, I shall be glad to hear from you when you can.

I had the mortification to learn last week, that, the Season being so far advanced, my Bookseller¹ thought it would be throwing away the effusions of my genius, to publish them at present. I should indeed myself be unwilling to send them forth at a time when my Verse would be as little regarded as what the Bellman says at Midnight. In the beginning of the ensuing winter therefore you may expect to see me in print, and in the meantime perhaps I may employ myself in providing materials for another volume. I never can answer for myself, however upon this subject, because, sometimes it costs me no trouble to write

¹ Joseph Johnson, 72 St. Paul's Churchyard.

a great deal, and sometimes after much labor I can produce little or nothing. This difference seems to give some countenance to the old story of a Muse, and rather flatters me with the Idea of Castalian Inspiration. Perhaps the critics will undeceive me hereafter, but in the meantime I find my account in supposing it may be so.

Be pleas'd to present my affectionate respects to Mrs. Hill and all your kindred.

Yrs my dear friend

WM. COWPER.

I am obliged to you for executing my commission to your Stationer.

15

TO HENRY MACKENZIE, ESQ.,¹

Brown Square, Edinburgh.

Cowper Museum (Olney) Col., No. 287.

Weston Underwood, 15 Sept., 1787.

Sir,

I should not have delay'd so long to acknowledge your obliging Letter and the welcome present that accompanied it, had I known my obligation sooner. An Indisposition of many months duration,² that deprived me of all intercourse with my friends at a distance, was the cause that your Letter though dated in May, did not reach me till yesterday. The volumes, indeed, I have not yet received, but they are safe, and I shall have them soon. I am no stranger, however, to the merits of the *Lounger* which were given me some time since by Lady Hesketh, who much admires them. The *Mirrours* have long had a place upon my shelf, and their younger Brothers, in all respects worthy of that near relation, shall soon occupy their place beside them. I highly honour the Authors of those elegant and useful

¹ Henry Mackenzie (1745—1831), Scotch lawyer and novelist: published *The Man of Feeling*, 1771, *The Man of the World*, 1773, *Julia de Roubigné*, 1777, editor of *The Mirror*, 1779—1780, and *The Lounger*, 1785—1787.

² The derangement of Jan.—July, 1787. See my *Life of William Cowper*, 2nd ed., p. 250.

works, and account myself happy that any production of mine has been worthy to procure me such distinguishing notice from you, Sir, in particular. An impertinent curiosity perhaps, but a natural one, prompts me to wish that you had favoured me with a knowledge of your signature, because I should read with additional pleasure the Essays that bear the mark of a Writer who has so much obliged me. If you are not in possession of my poems already, and can inform me how they may be conveyed to you so as not to cost more than they are worth, I will immediately give orders to my Bookseller for that purpose.

You have many names in Scotland that I truly venerate, and among them are two of your Coadjutors, as I understand, Beattie¹ and Blair,² to whom, if a stranger may take that liberty, I will beg you to present my warmest respects, with a thousand thanks for the pleasure that I have received from their excellent writings. Nobody, I believe, has ever read Beattie without a wish to know him.

I live in a delightful part of Buckinghamshire, and in a most agreeable neighbourhood. It is possible that you may sometimes travel southward. I am at no great distance from the great North road, and have once already been so

¹ James Beattie, poet (1735—1802), Gray called him "a poet, a philosopher and a good man."

² Hugh Blair, D.D. (1718—1800), Presbyterian minister and professor of rhetoric. Author of *Lectures on Rhetoric* (1783), &c.

favoured by a gentleman¹ from Scotland, whom I am now happy to number among my Correspondents. If you could, without too much inconvenience, make Weston in your way either to London or back again, you will always find me happy to receive you. At all events, I beg you to believe me, Sir,

Your much obliged and most obed^t Serv^t

WM. COWPER.

¹ Samuel Rose, who visited Cowper on 13th Jan., 1787, and in July of same year. See my *Life of William Cowper*, 2nd ed., pp. 250 and 252.

16

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

“At . . . llen’s, Esq., . . . wick.
nr Fareham, Hants.”¹

Cowper Museum (Olney) Col., No. 289.

Weston Underwood, 23 Sept., 1788.

My dear Friend,

After having excused myself a Norfolk journey to which I stood bound by promise, both on account of Mrs. Unwin’s great weakness and my own pressing literary engagements, I know not how it can be possible for us to take a frisk to London without seeming to neglect poor Johnny² and his kindred and mine, to a degree that could not fail to grieve them, and even give them just cause of offence. Either your kindness made you interpret my expressions too largely, or my wishes to seem not insensible of it, made me express myself too strongly, if anything passed in the shape of a promise that we would actually visit you this summer. I think in truth that I can perfectly remember the little word *if* being prefixt to all that I said on that subject, and that the promise amounted to this only—*If* we come to London, we will certainly set up our staff with

¹ Part of address destroyed.

² Rev. John Johnson, Cowper’s kinsman.

you. So far I confess but no farther. A thousand thanks to you, however, for your most friendly invitation, which, could anything in our present circumstances have drawn me from Weston, would certainly have done it.

Homer¹ has a tie upon me that cannot, must not indeed, on any account be broken, till all his demands are satisfied. I have this very morning finished the *Iliad*, both notes and alterations; and though I have fancied, while the revisal of the *Odyssey* was a distant object, that it would ask less labour in the finishing, it is not unlikely that when I actually take it in hand, I may find myself mistaken. Of this at least I am sure, that uneven verse abounds in it far more than it did once in the *Iliad*—yet to the latter the Critics objected on that account, though to the former never, perhaps because they had not read it. Hereafter they shall not quarrel with me on that score. The *Iliad* is now all smooth turnpike, and I will take equal care that there shall be no jolts in the *Odyssey*.

I have this moment a letter from Johnny which gives me great pleasure. He has preached twice at Dereham and given general satisfaction. His hearers find his voice much stronger and his utterance much more distinct than they expected, and the Bishop of Norwich, whom I shall always respect for the candour and liberality he has shown to this my amiable cousin, has promised not to

¹ Cowper began his translation of Homer in 1785. See *Life*, p. 230.

take advantage of the lapse, but to present Him to the Living of Hempnall¹ as soon as he shall be of age to take it.

(The end of the letter and the signature
have been torn off.)

17

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

"Post Office, Scarbro."²

[*Weston Underwood*] 25 Sept., 1788.

Say, what is the thing by my riddle design'd,
What you carried to London, and yet left behind?

My dear Friend,

I expect your answer, and without a fee.
The half hour next before breakfast I devote to
you. The moment Mrs. Unwin arrives in the

¹ Near Norwich.

² Part of this letter appears in my edition of *The Correspondence of William Cowper*, Vol. iii., pp. 320 and 321.

study, be what I have written much or little, I shall make my bow, and take leave, otherwise my letter will not set off till Sunday which would be a loss of 3 days. If you live to be a judge, as if I augur right you will, I shall expect to hear of a walking circuit.

I was shocked at what you tell me of my quondam friends. Superior talents, it seems, give no security for propriety of conduct; on the contrary, having a natural tendency to nourish pride, they often betray the possessor into such mistakes as men more moderately gifted never commit. Ability, therefore, is not wisdom, and an ounce of grace is a better guard against gross absurdity than the highest talents in the world.

If Markham¹ bore his rudeness patiently and without giving him any rebuff, he has learned in his Archbishopal office a meekness for which prelates have not been always celebrated, and which he in particular had once no claim to. While he was master at Westminster and before that period he discovered, on all trying occasions, a sturdiness and fortitude of temper, that on the occasion now in question, would have enabled him sufficiently to avenge his insulted dignity. Happy for you that you did not pay your visit till this tremendous man was departed! Where could you have hidden yourself from his frown, or what shield would you have presented against his

¹ W. Markham, Archbishop of York 1777—1808.

arrows? Yet culpable as he is in some respects, I can assure you on second thoughts that you would have nothing to fear from him. For to modest men and diffident I have ever known him gentle and tractable as a lamb.

I rejoice that you are prepared for transcript work: here there will be plenty for you. The day on which you shall receive this, I beg you will remember to drink one glass at least to the success of the *Iliad*, which I finished the day before yesterday, and yesterday began the *Odyssey*. It will be some time before I shall perceive myself travelling in another road; the objects around me are at present so much the same; Olympus and the council of gods meet me at my first entrance. To tell you the truth, I am weary of heroes and deities, and with reverence be it spoken, shall be glad, for variety's sake, to exchange their company for that of a Cyclops.

You speak of turning your steps southward, by which expression you mean I suppose to signify that you intend to walk. Beware of overdoing it; for though Mrs. Unwin is an excellent nurse, both she and I had rather that you should have no need of one. She has been lately much indisposed, having suffered excruciating pain from a boil under her arm, which however has broken and she is now better. We shall both be happy to receive you. The Frogs¹ will not be gone if you arrive at the

¹ The Throckmortons.

time you mention. I am sorry for it, say you. Then there will be more terrours and tremblings for me. But you need not fear them and that you know. Mrs. Frog¹ dines with us to-day, *sola*. The rest are all going to Northton² races. Young, handsome and lively, she yet prefers serenity and silence,

*Et sapit, et mecum facit et dijudicat aequè*³

I am, my dear friend, with Mrs. Unwin's very
best respects

Ever yours

W^M. COWPER.

¹ Mrs. Throckmorton. Maria, daughter of Thomas Gifford, of Chillington (Staffordshire), and wife of Mr. John Throckmorton, who in 1791 succeeded his father as baronet.

² Northampton, probably.

³ And has the same tastes that I have.

18

To Rev. JOHN NEWTON.¹

Weston [*Underwood*] 9 Dec., 1788.

My dear friend,

That I may return to you the Latin MS.² as soon as possible I take a short opportunity to scratch a few hasty lines, that it may not arrive alone. I have made here and there an alteration which appear'd to me for the better; but on the whole, I cannot but wonder at your adroitness in a business to which you have been probably at no time much accusom'd and which for many years you have not at all practised. If when you shall have written the whole you shall wish for a corrector of the rest, so far as my own skill in the matter goes, it is entirely at your service.

Our rural rumours in general deserve but little credit, and it seems now, that even a Father is not to be implicitly believed in what he relates of his own daughter. Mr. Raban³ called on purpose to tell us that Jenny was dying, but Dr. Kerr⁴ being consulted, instead of confirming has entirely falsi-

¹ No address. So it was probably delivered by some person who was visiting London.

² The Narrative written in Latin by Mr. Van Lier. It was translated by Cowper and issued in 1792 with the title of *The Power of Grace Illustrated*.

³ Thomas Raban. See my edition of Cowper's Letters, iii. p. 330.

⁴ Dr. Kerr, of Northampton.

fied the report. He says that she is not only not in a dying state, but has never been in the least danger. I carried your Letter to Mrs. Raban myself, who informed me that the poor girl is better, though extremely weak [through the operation of medicines prescribed to her by the doctor. He conceives it a case of courses].¹ Mrs. Unwin is much obliged to Mrs. Newton for her kind letter and will answer it soon. Lady Hes[ket]h has had a cold and sore throat, but is recover'd. She is obliged to you for that part of your letter in which she is mentioned, and returns her compliments^{ts}. She loves all my friends and consequently cannot be indifferent to you. The Frogs² are gone into Norfolk on a visit to Lord Petres. They will probably return this day fortnight. Mr. Finch³ is now Preacher at Ravenstone. Mr. Canniford still preaches here. The latter is warmly attended, the former, of course, delivers himself to the walls. He has heard Mr. Canniford, having I suppose a curiosity to know by what charm he held his popularity; but whether he has heard him to his own edification or not, is more than I can say. Probably he wonders, for I have heard that he is a sensible man. His successful competitor is wise in nothing but his knowledge of the Gospel.

¹ The portion in brackets has been scribbled over by a later hand, but it is still legible.

² The Throckmortons.

³ The Hon. Henry Finch, Rector of Ravenstone with Weston Underwood, 1786—1788. The Rev. L. Canniford, who was his curate, took the services at Weston Underwood. See Cowper's droll letters about him (Letters iii. 219).

I am summoned to Breakfast and am my dear friend with our best Love to Mrs. Newton, Miss Catlett¹ and yourself

Most affectionately yours

WM. COWPER.

I have not the assurance to call this an answer to your letter, in which were many things deserving much notice, but it is the best that in the present moment I am able to send you.

¹ Newton's niece and adopted daughter.

19

TO MRS. COWPER

[Widow of Major W. Cowper].

"Devonshire Street, Bloomsbury, London."

Cowper Museum (Olney) Col., No. 290.

Weston Underwood, 21 Jan., 1789.

My dear Cousin,

I beg you will never want encouragement to write to me. I am neither so great nor so good for nothing as to have forgotten your many kindnesses to me in years past, but shall always rejoice to be informed of your well-being, and especially from yourself.

I thank you for your congratulations on the subject of my annuity. I was born to subsist at the expense of my friends; in that and in that alone, God knows, resembling my Lord and Master. I shall ever, I hope, retain a grateful sense of the kindness of Lord Cowper to whom I was entirely a stranger; but his bounty is a proof that he did not account me one.

[I share]¹ sincerely with you in the pleasure you receive from the continuation of Henry's² emolument to your daughter and my good cousin

¹ Back of the signature, which is cut out.

² Henry, son of General Spencer Cowper.

Maria.¹ His Lordship could not have bestowed it on a more deserving woman, or who would make a better use of it.

My dear cousin, I dwell in a snug corner of a beautiful country, in which are many walks, some in groves and some in fields and some by river's side, with which you would be delighted. If you would give indeed a pleasure to myself and Mrs. Unwin come and visit it. We are quiet folks and will give you your own way, be it what it will. And this I mention beforehand as an inducement which nobody need despise, even though it be offered to a person gentle as yourself and a promoter always of the convenience of others.

With my best love to all who belong to you, I remain, my dear cousin, most affectionately yours,

[W^M. COWPER].

¹ Daughter of William Cowper, of The Park, Hertingfordbury, and wife of Henry Cowper.

20

TO MR. JOSEPH JOHNSON [Publisher].¹

Weston, 17 Feb., 1789.

Lest you should think me tedious and I should become conscious of being so I send you the little that I have been able to do in the few hours that I could steal from Homer. You may possibly think that I have bestowed too much time on the *Athenaid*,² and I am not sure that you are very desirous of analysis. It occupies much room, and perhaps is not always read. Send me a line to inform me of what you most wish, whether analytical revisals or critical, and I will proceed with the 2 poems that I have not yet reviewed accordingly.

You will perceive that my labours on the *Athenaid* end with the 2nd vol: but you will find it necessary I suppose to distribute what I send into two separate reviews, and shall receive from me an analysis of the 3rd before you can possibly want it.

The MS poem I have not yet read, concluding that it could better afford to wait, than the others which you told me had been already too long

¹ The original is in the possession of Mr. George A. Ball, Muncie, Indiana, U.S.A.

² *The Athenaid*, by Richard Glover (1712—1785). Glover was also the author of "Hosier's Ghost," included in Percy's *Reliques*. Cowper was obliging Joseph Johnson by reviewing *The Athenaid* for the *Analytical Review*.

delayed. For the future, if you please, you must send me authors less impatient, for while I have Homer in hand it is but by occasion that I can give myself to this business.

Remember the hope you have given me that when the days shall be of a due length I shall have the pleasure to see you and Mr. Fuseli¹ at Weston. I do not press it just now, M^{rs} Unwin having had a dreadful fall in the late frost, from the consequences of which she has not yet recovered. But the approaching spring will I hope restore her and bring us all together.

I beg my compliments to Mr. Fuseli and am

D^r Sir,

Your most obedient

W^M. COWPER.

¹ Henry Fuseli, artist (1742—1825).

21

To the Reverend MARTIN MADAN, Epsom, Surrey.¹

Weston Underwood, June 8, 1789.

My Dear Cousin,

I am much obliged to you for your late publication which I received a few days since from the hands of Mr. Bean,² my neighbour, the Vicar of Olney, by whom Mr. Newton transmitted it to me. You have bestowed much pains on two valuable Writers, and to very good purpose. It will not be your fault if they are not more generally read than they have been, and better understood. As for me my time is so much occupied with Homer that I have not yet found leisure to read more than the first Satyr of Juvenal and the chief part of the second; such a sample as this however warrants sufficiently the judgment which I have formed of the whole, which is that you have executed your undertaking well, and that not the Illiterati only but the Literati themselves also are much obliged to you; for few even of *them* are so familiar with Juvenal and Persius as to be superior to the aids which your version and your notes will afford them. Dr. Earl, I remember, was a Master of both these authors, and could

¹ Appeared in *The Spectator*, 22 March, 1919. The original is in Haverford College, Pennsylvania.

² Rev. James Bean, Vicar of Olney from 1788 till his death in 1795.

perhaps have repeated the greatest part of Juvenal, but of all the Scholars I have ever known he was the only one so well acquainted with him. Juvenal, of all the Roman Writers, was most his Favourite.

My labours, I hope, are drawing to a conclusion. I have begun the 19th Book of the Odyssey, and expect to finish the translation of that poem in about three months; I shall then proceed to a revisal of the whole and to press with it as soon as possible. Life wears away, and I have a curiosity to know the success of my long and arduous undertaking. In the grave there is no remembrance of Homer.

I beg my affectionate compliments to Mrs. and Miss Madan, and to Mr. Cowper if he be with you, and remain, My dear Cousin, Truly yours,

WM. COWPER.

22

To SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.¹*The Lodge [Weston Underwood]*, Nov. 22, 1789.

My dear Sir,

I mean to write to you, if a cough that interrupts me continually will permit. It is a sort of exercise which, whether I will or not, I generally find myself obliged to take in the beginning of Winter, and which may perhaps be necessary to compensate the loss of my evening walks, no longer possible.

I thank you for your history of Dr. White and his borrowed plumes. The man who could with any degree of complacence dress himself in a plumage so procured, was very likely to refuse payment for it when demanded. The same want of delicacy is observeable on both occasions. He is I suppose the same Doctor whom I see mentioned in a note of Holes subjoined to a passage in his preface to his poem called Arthur. In that note he calls him Arabic Professor in the University of Oxford, and expresses something like a wish that he would favour the world with a new English version of the Arabian Nights entertainments, a work for which he is, probably, better qualified than for the composition of sermons.

¹ Appeared in *The Spectator*, 22 March, 1919. Parts of it had appeared in my edition of Cowper's Letters, IV. 407. The original is in Haverford College, Pennsylvania.

Though his Arabic knowledge may perhaps prove at least *as unreal a mockery* as his Theological. The next time I dined at the Hall after the receipt of this intelligence, I promised myself that I should figure away with it and treat my host with a new story.

To find already known what I for news
Had thought to have reported.

Indeed I never touched a subject yet which I found new to our neighbour, and on most, his information is accurate to a degree that surprizes one, considering his retired situation.

We are now reduced from our square table to a small oval one, and from a party of sometimes four, and sometimes three, to our original duality. London is not only an abomination in my account, because it runs away with my friends, but because it steals them at a season when we should be especially glad of their company. But if we live in the country we must be contented to bear the inconveniences of a situation which is not chargeable with many. Perhaps I have named the only one of any importance. For though the trees are now leafless, the days short and gloomy, and the walks dirty, there never was nor will be that metropolis on earth which I would prefer to the country even in this condition.

I promised you the Northampton verses,¹ and

¹ Written by Cowper at the request of John Cox, parish clerk of All Saints, Northampton. These *Mortuary Verses* are for the years 1787, 1788, 1789 and 1790. There were none for 1791, the old clerk having died, but Cowper wrote verses for 1792 and 1793 to oblige Cox's successor. See *Life*, p. 254.

should have transcribed them into this sheet, but my cousin who has them has undertaken to furnish you with a copy. I am glad that you were pleased with those which I sent to Johnson. I have two or three friends in the world, whom if I can please before publication, I give myself no trouble about the fate of the piece which has once had their approbation.

When my cousin wrote to tell me of her safe arrival, she informed me that she had seen you, and you only. I rejoiced that you had given her so early a call, and should have rejoiced more had she seen you in the best health and spirits. We feel ourselves much interested in your welfare, and few days pass in which you do not furnish part of our conversation. This accompanies a Turkey of which we beg your acceptance. Mrs. U. bids me say that you will perhaps find the fat of it somewhat yellow, but let not that discourage you when it appears on your table. It is owing to the particular manner of feeding it. Mr. Rye¹ told me a few days since that he saw your uncle Clarke lately (at Lord Spencer's if I am not mistaken) and that he was in perfect health and very cheerful.

Pardon a dull letter. My cold makes me uncommonly stupid. With Mrs. Unwin's compts.

I am Sincerely yours,

W^M. COWPER.

¹ Rev. Joseph Jekyll Rye, Vicar of Dallington, Northampton.

23

TO LIEUTENANT GENERAL COWPER,
"Kingston-on-Thames, Surrey."

Avenell Col., No. 14.

Weston Underwood, 13 June, 1792.

My dear Cousin,

I can return you an immediate answer without feeling at present any impediment from Milton,¹ to whom since M^{rs} Unwin's last dangerous and alarming illness I have been unable to give any attention. The utmost attention that I can bestow upon her is not more than she is well entitled to by that which she has for thirty years bestow'd upon me, during which time she has more than once watched over me day and night for months together, taking a share in my afflictions that has been fatal to her own constitution, and has largely contributed to the illness by which she suffers now. She has, I thank God, in a wonderful degree recover'd, considering the time of life and the severity of this last attack; but much is to be regain'd before she will be restored even to that small pittance of health which she enjoyed after a similar one by which she was shaken in the winter.

¹ Cowper began his translation of Milton's Latin poems in March, 1792.

All that I have said on this subject it seem'd necessary to premise, that you might rightly understand a second Sonnet of my friend Hayley's¹ written in the blank leaf of the first volume of his poems with which he presented M^{rs} Unwin a few days after his arrival. I shall not have room in this sheet to say any part of what I wish to say on the subject of your last, or on the subject of his kindness and affectionate behaviour to me, but I will find an opportunity hereafter. I now proceed to transcribe his first sonnet which accompanied his first letter, and which first letter and sonnet were detain'd so long at my bookseller's who was commissioned to transmit them to me, that the writer of them began to repent of having sent them and to despair of an answer. An article in the newspaper that pitted us against each other as rival Editors, gave birth to this,

SONNET.

Cowper! delight of all who justly prize
The splendid magic of a strain divine,
That sweetly tempts th' enlightened soul to rise,
As sunbeams lure an eagle to the skies!
Poet to whom I feel my heart incline
As to a Friend, endear'd by virtuous ties!
Ne'er shall my name in Pride's contentious line
Of hostile emulation cope with thine:
No, let us meet with kind fraternal aim
Where Milton's shrine invites a votive throng!
With Thee I share a passion for His fame,
His Zeal for Truth, his scorn of venal blame;
But Thou hast rarer gifts; to thee belong
His Harp of highest tone, his Sanctity of Song.

¹ William Hayley, poet, and Cowper's first biographer (1745—1820).

It is not common for one poet to receive this kind of tribute from another, but he seems so perfectly free from the jealousy that generally prevails among our fraternity that I may say of him as I believe Desdemona says of Othello, but more truly

the sun where he was born
Drew all such humours out of him

I will now give you his sonnet

To Mrs. UNWIN.

Mary ! whose Friendship like a Seraph's wings
Was the bright shield of Cowper, in whose guard
Rescued from fiends, and now no more ill-starr'd.
From woe's dark waste to Glory's field he springs,
And with celestial animation sings
Of hallow'd themes by meaner poets marr'd,
But now applauded by the world, that rings
With the blest music of thy blameless bard :
How must thy soul exult in his Renown,
Proud of a tutelary angel's part !
On this my homage to his laureate crown,
Nor less to Thee, his muse ! Thou wilt not frown ;
For me thou see'st no rival of his art,
But of his Fame the Friend, the Brother of his Heart.

And now having fill'd a sheet with my own praises, and made you richer in this last copy than our fair Cousin who has not yet seen it, I will only add the concern it gives me that poor M^{rs}. Cowper's state of health and your own also are so very indifferent, and subscribe myself, my Dear Cousin

Most truly yours

W^M. COWPER.

24

TO MRS. COWPER

[Widow of Major Cowper,]

"Devonshire Street, Queen's Square, London."

Avenell Col., No. 15.

Weston Underwood, 24 Sept., 1792.

My dear Cousin,

Your kind epistle of the 6th of August should not have waited so long for an answer, had I been at home, but I have been absent 7 weeks on a visit to M^r. Hayley in Sussex,¹ and return'd only on Wednesday evening last. The first thing I saw on my arrival was your acceptable present,² for which I sincerely thank you, and as sincerely wish you all the success, which, the pious train of your poetry consider'd, can reasonably be expected. For though we live in a perishing world, and must all perish with it but for the remedy that the Gospel offers, most of us are so enamour'd of our disease, as to dislike everything that reminds us of the antidote. In undertaking so long a journey, long at least to me who have not journey'd these 20 years before, I had principally a view to M^{rs}. Unwin's better health, who has been extremely

¹ At Eartham, Sussex, August and September, 1792. See *Life*, p. 310.

² In 1792 appeared a small volume entitled *Original Poems on various occasions. By a Lady. Revised by William Cowper, Esq., of the Inner Temple.* The "Lady" was Mrs. Cowper.

enfeebled by her last alarming indisposition. She is come home in many respects benefitted by the exercise of travelling & by the change of air, but is still weak and wants much of perfect recovery. Your kind mention of her in your last gave her great pleasure, as she desires me to tell you, and I tell you beside, that a kindness shown to her is never thrown away, for she never forgets it. You can only oblige us more by giving us both an interest in your prayers.

In my return out of Sussex I dined with General Cowper, whom I had seen on my way to Eartham, and had not seen before in 30 years. Thirty years make a great change in these tenements of clay, our present habitation, and it was only by inference that I knew either him or M^{rs} Cowper; for I found neither in their features nor persons any traces of what they once were. He received us, that is to say, myself, M^{rs} Unwin, and my cousin Johnson with a most kind and friendly welcome, and I still rejoice to have had once more an interview with so near a relation whom I had long despair'd to see again. Who is that cousin Johnson? say you. He is a Grandson of Roger Donne's, who was brother of my own mother; a young man destined to the Church, and of whom there is a good hope that he will be a true and useful minister of the Gospel.

I rejoice sincerely in the success of the Son of

our good Bishop,¹ and if his Lordship of Bristol be in town entreat you to tell him so when you see him. He too is a Cousin and dear friend of mine whom I am likely to see never more. How happy should I be to have that expectation disappointed!

The picture of me by Abbott² is reckon'd here a most exact likeness, and since that was drawn I have sat to Romney whom I met at Mr. Hayley's. His performance also is reckon'd a most striking resemblance. I have now been sufficiently copied, and hope to have nothing more to do with painters.

Lady Hesketh has been very ill at Cheltenham and has suffer'd by Gall stones the most excruciating anguish, but she is better, and when I heard from her about a fortnight since seemed to be in tolerable health and good spirits. It is not unlikely that Farquhar, who is her Aesculapius, will order her to Bath, in which case I shall hardly see her at Weston till the return of Spring. A long separation, but to which for her health's sake, I can submit without repining. Were it possible that you should find an opportunity to send me some of Dr. Underwood's ointment, you w'd render me perhaps an essential service; for my eyes are always weak and have lately been much

¹ Spencer Madan, Bishop of Bristol, and brother of Rev. Martin Madan.

² Lemuel Abbot (1760—1803). The picture was painted at Weston Underwood, July, 1792. See *Life*, p. 308.

inflamed ; Elliott is dead, & his medicines, as they are prepared by his successor, do me harm. Adieu my Dear Cousin—with Mrs. Unwin's respects & best comp^s.

I remain, Ever yours,

W^M. COWPER.

25

TO MRS. COWPER (formerly of the Park),
“ At Mrs. Davenport’s, Paradise Row,
Chelsea.”

Avenell Col., No. 16.

Weston Underwood, 30 Sept., 1792.

My Dear Cousin

I thank you much for your early answer, and for the circumstantial account you give me of the ointment in question and of its effects. But since it is requisite that the Doctor should occasionally visit the person who uses it, and that ceremony is in my case impracticable, I must be content without it. To say truth I rather admire your courage who persevered so long in the use of so painful and troublesome a process, than feel myself able to imitate you. It is indeed with great reluctance that I ever have recourse to a remedy for the eyes that occasions them much pain. They are a part that will not well endure irritation at the best, and to irritate them when they are inflamed seems a solecism in medical practise. Mine, I thank God, are better than when I wrote last, and will, I hope, soon be well again ; a cold caught on my journey home in a crazy chaise, the windows of which were uncageable was the cause, and by the help of James’ powder

I have now pretty well conquer'd the effect. It gave me real concern that I miss'd my cousin Charles¹ so unfortunately as I did. Had I reach'd Ham only a day later I should have had an opportunity to see a relation whom I have long wished to see, and whom it is very uncertain when I shall see. He is much a favourite with those who know him, and has been always highly spoken of by the few of his profession who have at any time fallen in my way. I beg that you will give my love to him and assure him that our mortification in this instance was mutual.

As we pass'd through London I saw over a door in great gold characters this Inscription

I 5 0

COUSINS

Ah, thought I, if my cousins were but of the number, how happily might I see them altogether!

Our visit in Sussex was a very agreeable one. Mr. Hayley is one of the most amiable and friendly of mankind, his house is elegant, delightfully situated, and the scenery that surrounds it, magnificent to an uncommon degree. But when I had once satiated myself with contemplating the ocean, the almost mountainous hills and the extensive woods of that country, I began to languish for the snug enclosures of my own. Warmth is necessary both to Mrs. Unwin's well being and to mine; to a warmer climate at least

¹ Charles Madan (Mrs. Cowper's brother).

than that of the Sussex coast we have been so long accustom'd that to the great surprise of the natives, we shiver'd constantly with cold during the last 5 weeks of our abode among them. Two degrees farther South might have been expected to be proportionably warmer, but the aspect of the country is bleak and wild and the land lofty; circumstances which more than compensate for the difference of latitude. You judge well therefore in supposing us glad to be at home again.

I beg that when you write to your sister Maitland you will remember me to her affectionately and beleive me, my dear cousin, with Mrs. Unwin's best compl^{ts} most sincerely yours

WILLIAM COWPER.

26

TO GEORGE ROMNEY.¹*Weston Underwood, 28 Nov., 1792.*

My dear Romney,

Since I left Eartham nothing has occurred that has given me so much pleasure as the arrival of your fine picture of our most amiable friend Hayley; and your kindness in sending me what the box contained beside, gratifies me in the highest degree, convincing me that I am not forgotten by one whom I shall always remember with affection. All arrived safe, and for all I thank you. My young cousin² has told me by letter how kindly you behaved to him when he called on you. For this I thank you likewise, for I love him and have great reason to do so. It was a very sensible mortification to me that I could not have the pleasure of seeing you at your own house in my way through London; but the danger of offending others whom I should have been obliged to pass unvisited, deterred me. The happy day I hope will come when you will make me amends for what I lost for that severe necessity, by giving us your company at Weston. Happy indeed should

¹ From *Memoirs of the Life and Works of George Romney*, by Rev. John Romney, B.D. London, 1830.

² Rev. John Johnson.

I be to see you here, and the hope of it, which you gave me encouragement to entertain, is too pleasant to be slightly parted with. Hayley will be called to London sometime in the course of the coming year, and a chaise will bring you easily in seven hours. A little relaxation will be good for you, and your enjoying it here will be equally good for me. I have been a poor creature ever since I saw you; dispirited to the greatest degree and incapable of all mental exertion; a state from which I do not expect deliverance till the buds shall peep and less sullen skies revive me. Mrs. Unwin is at least as well as she was at Eartham—perhaps a little better. She desires me to say how kindly she remembers you, and how much she shall rejoice to see you.

Adieu—God bless you!

Believe me affectionately yours

WM. COWPER.

27

To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.¹
Chancery Office, London.

Cowper Museum, No. 292.

Weston Underwood, 30 Nov., 1792.

My dear friend

I find myself in want of many things, but chiefly of money, and shall be obliged to you for a Draft to such amount as my budget will supply. Among other extraordinaries incidental to the present year, I have found it necessary to be my own dairyman and to purchase cows. For your great city devours everything, so that it is impossible any longer to find a pound of butter or cream to our tea in all the country.

I have found that it is possible to change the air and the scene, and to derive no benefit from either. In the hope of it, however, both to Mrs. Unwin and myself, I journeyed last summer into Sussex,² as probably you have heard. I was extremely low in spirits when I went and had been so for some time, and my poor fellow traveller had been almost deprived of the use of her limbs by something like a paralytic stroke in the Spring. There we spent 6 weeks breathing the purest air, in the neighbour-

¹ Hill was one of the sixty clerks in Chancery.

² On a visit to Hayley at Earham, Aug. and Sept., 1792.

hood of the sea, and in a country most magnificent. But I return'd the miserable thing I went, and poor Mrs. Unwin little better. My spirits however have improved within the last week or ten days, quite contrary to my expectation, for I assured myself that as we sunk deeper into the winter I should grow worse. December and January have long been my terrors, for when I have plunged into greater depths of melancholy than usual, those months have always been the fatal season. But no more of this. It will give me true pleasure to hear that you are well and cheerful and that Mrs. Hill is so likewise; I beg my best compliments to her and remain sincerely & affectionately yours,

WM. COWPER.

28

TO SAMUEL ROSE, Esq., Chancery Lane.¹

Weston [*Underwood*], 18 June, 1793.

My Dear Friend—

I answer your letter the moment I have received it, and yet have no cause to boast of extraordinary punctuality, for I should have written unwritten to by you. The occasion is this.

I have lately received a letter from a poor man,² a printer, now in gaol at Leicester, having been cast in a prosecution for selling Paine's treasons. His case is singularly hard, as you will see when you read it. I send you two Leicester Heralds, in which it is stated, and . . . book accompanies them. His name is Phillips, and his request to me is for Sonnet or Song or anything in the poetical way—because something of that sort tolerably well executed, might he thinks be of service to him. Touched by the hardship he seems to have suffer'd I have composed a sonnet in his favour, but Govermt is so jealous and rigorous at present that I fear'd to send it till some wiser man than myself should assure me that

¹ Apparently unpublished.

² Richard Phillips, editor of the *Leicester Herald*. In 1793 he was prosecuted for selling copies of Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man*, and sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment. Phillips subsequently drifted to London, where prosperity overtook him. In 1807 he was elected Sheriff, and in 1808 he was knighted.

I might do it safely. I therefore subjoin it for your opinion, and beg that if you have any doubts yourself you will consult some Legal friend who may ascertain the matter. If it may go safely, I should be glad to do anything that might in the smallest degree console the prisoner; if not, it will be nothing to me, any farther than he is concern'd, to suppress it.¹ Eccolo.

A SONNET

Addressed to Mr. Phillips now in confinem^t at Leicester.

Phillips—the Suff'rer less by Law than Pow'r,
 Though prison'd in an adamantine hold,
 Might bear a heart as free and uncontroll'd
 In his dark cell, as in a summer's bow'r.
 Thy sly accuser, who at such an hour
 When all suspicion sleeps, like Him of old,
 Eve's tempter, wreath'd in many an artful fold
 Conceals his drift with purpose to devour - - -

He is the pris'ner ; and those bars within
 That hoop his sorry vitals round about
 Dwells one, who never shall compassion win
 From Just and Good, till Judgment call him out.
 Thou, then, less deeply at thy wrongs repine ;
 Scorn is his meed, commiseration thine.

I send you his two letters at the same time which together with the papers will make you just as wise as myself. At a fit opportunity I shall be glad to have them again.

I rejoice at the friendly reception you have found in Savile row,² with all my heart, and hope

¹ In compliance with Rose's advice the sonnet was not sent to Phillips. See my *Life of William Cowper*, 2nd edition, p. 325.

² From Joseph Hill, who at this date lived in Saville Row.

never to be an occasion of difference between you more.

Mrs. U. is at least as well as she was, and I am willing to hope, a little better. She sends her warm thanks for y^r kind enquiries and unites with me in every good wish to all our friends great and small beneath your roof.

I remain my dear friend—

Sincerely yours

W^M. COWPER.

Johnny went this morning. He and a friend of his a Mr. Wright walk to St. Neot's, and proceed thence in a chaise to Camb[ridge]. He hopes to get testimonials by entring himself at another college. I forgot to say that to P's¹ first letter I gave a civil negative. to his second I have as yet given no answer, nor shall till I get one from you.

¹ Phillips's.

29

TO THOMAS LAWRENCE, Esq.,¹
Old Bond Street, London.

Weston, 18 Oct., 1793.

Dear Sir,

As often as I have comforted myself with the hope of seeing you again soon, I have felt a sensible drawback upon that comfort, from the fear of a disappointment, which, considering your profession and your just pre-eminence in it, appeared to me extremely probable.

Your letter, most welcome otherwise, gave me this most unwelcome information the moment I saw your name at the bottom of it. We all feel our loss, and much as I suppose you are beloved by my friend Rose, who has pretty acute discernment, I will venture to say he is not more mortified than myself. You do me justice, if you believe that my invitation did not consist of words merely: in truth, it was animated by a very sincere wish that it might prove acceptable to you; and once more I give you the same assurance, that, at any time when you shall find it possible to allow yourself some relaxation in the country, if you will

¹ Printed in *The Life and Correspondence of Sir Thomas Lawrence*, Kt., by D. E. Williams. 1831. Thomas Lawrence, portrait painter (1769—1830). His sketch of Cowper was made at Weston Underwood in Oct., 1793. He was knighted in 1815.

enjoy it here, you will confer a real favour on one whom you have already taught to set a high value on your company and friendship. I am too old to be very hasty in forming new connexions: but short as our acquaintance has been, to you I have the courage to say, that my heart and my door will always be gladly open to you.

Mr. Rose is gone this morning to Newport,¹ and does not know that I write. My cousin, whom you often heard me mention by the name of Johnny, is gone with him. Him Mr. Rose will introduce to you on his return to London; and though perhaps, being a little shy, he may not discover it in his manner when he has the pleasure to see you, he has already caught from me an ardent desire to know you.

Mrs. Unwin sends her compliments, and sincerely joins me in the wish that you will never hereafter consider us as strangers, or give us reason to think you one.

I remain, dear Sir, affectionately yours,

WILLIAM COWPER.

When will you come and give me a drawing of the old oak?²

¹ Newport Pagnell.

² Now called Cowper's Oak. It is in Yardley Chase.

30

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY.¹

Eartham, near Chichester.

Dec. 8, 1793.

My dear Hayley,

I have waited, and waited impatiently for a line from you, and am at last determined to send you one, to enquire what is become of you, and why you are silent so much longer than usual, above a week since I learned from our friend Rose that you are well, and returned to Eartham; for to him I had written in the enquiring and wondering stile, having been possessed by a thousand fears about you lest you had relapsed and were incapable of writing, or perhaps dead.

I received duly at the time the very handsome present you had taught me to expect, and in all probability, to judge by the little I have yet seen of it, as useful as handsome. I need not add that I mean Heyn's Virgil, for which I most sincerely thank you.

I want to know many things which only you can tell me, but especially I want to know what has been the issue of your conference with Nichols.

¹ The original is in the possession of Mr. George A. Ball, Muncie, Indiana, U.S.A. It is partly printed in my edition of *The Correspondence of William Cowper*, iv., p. 477.

Has he seen your work¹—is he satisfied that he may publish it without hazard to the honour and glory of his King's booksellership, or must you after all publish it on your own account? I am impatient for the appearance of it, because impatient to have the spotless credit of the great poet's character as a man and a citizen vindicated as it ought to be and as it never will be again.

It is a great relief to me that my Miltonic labours are suspended.² I am now busy in transcribing the alterations of Homer³ having finished the whole revisal. I must then write a new preface, which done, I shall endeavor immediately to descant on the *Four Ages*.

We often talk of you, and you are always a pleasant subject. Lady Hesketh sends you her best compliments and her love, with many thanks for her foot warmers. Adieu.

Yrs, my dear brother

W^M. COWPER.

¹ Hayley's Edition of Milton's Poems.

² *The Latin and Italian Poems of Milton*. Translated by Cowper. The work appeared in 1808.

³ Cowper's translation of Homer appeared in 1791. He then set about revising it.

31

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esq.¹

[*Dereham*], 20 June, 1797.

Ignorant of everything but my own instant and impending misery, I know neither what I do, when I write, nor can do otherwise than write, because I am bidden to do so. Perfect despair, the most perfect that ever possess'd any mind, has had possession of mine, you know how long, and knowing that, will not need to be told who writes.

¹ Appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly*, July, 1907. Incomplete.

APPENDIX

ACCOUNT OF COWPER'S ESTATE

Two items of interest respecting Cowper have recently come to light. The first (which is of no intrinsic value) consists of verses written when Cowper had removed from Olney to Weston Underwood, 15th November, 1786. It was printed in *The Times Literary Supplement* of 3rd January, 1924. The second is the Account of Cowper's Estate, a copy of which has been kindly sent to me by the Misses Hog, descendants of Mrs. Maitland, one of Cowper's cousins. It runs as on the following pages.

LADY HESKETH, ADMINISTRATRIX OF THE EFFECTS
OF WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ.

DR.	£	s.	d.
Reced of the Rev ^d John Johnson what was due from him on Ballance of his Acco ^t at the Time of M ^r Cowper's Death, 26 April, 1800	31	3	2
1801, Dec ^r 26. Reced by Books as valued by M ^r Bacon of Norwich sold to the Rev ^d M ^r Johnson ¹	55	0	0
— of D ^o for Linnen valued by D ^o and sold	20	0	0
The Plate D ^o ...	8	2	3
By the Amount of some Trinkets as valued by M ^r Brown of Bristol	5	0	0
Of M ^{rs} Boddam ² on Note	100	0	0
1801, May. } Reced of Samuel Rose ³ Esq ^{re} 24 th July. } Ballance due from him to M ^r } Cowper at his Death 26 April 1800 ... }	150	0	0
	119	1	0
Reced of D ^o for the Arrears of M ^r Cowper's Pen ^{cion} ⁴ received by M ^r Rose at different Times after M ^r Cowper's Death ...	346	14	6
By Lady Hesketh for Hayley's Milton ...	12	12	0
1801, Jan ^{ry} 5. Reced in Discharge of Bond from M ^r Johnson Bookseller for the Quarto Edition of M ^r Cowper's Translation of Homer	630	18	0
Reced of Henry Cowper Esq ^{re} the late Dean of Durham's Annuity. 1 year due to M ^r Cowper at his Death	20	0	0
By Sale of £100 Bank 3 p. Cent Annuities in the Name of the Rev ^d John Cowper ...	67	15	0
Interest half a year. Note M ^r Hill allowed the prior Interest in his Account to Mids ^r 1801	1	10	0
A Five Guinea Piece	5	5	0
A Double Portugal Piece	3	12	0
	£1576 12 11		

¹ Cowper's cousin, Rev. John Johnson.

² Anne, daughter of Roger Donne, Cowper's uncle.

³ To whom many of Cowper's letters are written.

⁴ Pension of £300 a year bestowed on Cowper on 5 July, 1794. The original document, signed by King George III. and William Pitt, the Prime Minister, is preserved in the Cowper Museum (Cowper's House, Olney).

CR.	£	s.	d.
1800, May. Paid the Bills & Expences on M ^r Cowper's Funeral	102	1	11
Paid Mess ^{rs} Crespigny & Askew, Proctors, for the Probate of M ^r Cowper's Will ...	30	10	8
Paid D ^o for the Administration to the Reverend John Cowper ¹	4	18	8
1801, Feb ^{ry} . Paid to the Rev ^d M ^r Greathead ² a Debt of £20 lent to M ^r Cowper in ...	20	0	0
Paid M ^r Bacon Auctioneer at Norwich ...	3	13	6
M ^{rs} Perrowne ³ for her long Attendance on M ^r Cowper	200	0	0
Paid entering the Wills of W ^m and John Cowper at the Bank and Powers of Attorney ...	1	18	0
1802, March. Paid M ^r Hill ⁴ the Ballance of his Account of Moneys advanced to M ^r Cowper	337	0	0
	600	2	9
Ballance	976	10	2
	<u>£1576</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>11</u>

The Ballance, £976 10 2, divided into 9 equal parts

	108	10	0	
Tax at 3 p. Cent	3	5	1	retained out of each Share

£105 4 11 Nett share of each.

£3	5	1
		9

£29 5 9 Total Tax on the Ballance, £976 10s. 2d.

¹ Cowper's brother.

² Rev. Samuel Greatheed (this is the correct spelling), who was at one time assistant minister to the Rev. William Bull, Independent Minister, of Newport Pagnell. He is often mentioned in Cowper's letters.

³ Miss Margaret Perowne.

⁴ Joseph Hill.

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